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WILDLIFE SERVICES—NEW JERSEY

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in New Jersey

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on New Jersey Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts. New Jersey is a diverse ecological mix of urban and suburban settings and agricultural and forested environments that provide habitat for valuable wildlife populations, while at the same time, supporting the nation's highest human population density.

WS works to protect human health and property at airports, schools, parks and recreation areas, and other locations throughout the State. The program protects agricultural resources from crop depredation, and guards natural resources, such as wetlands, from wildlife damage. WS personnel also educate the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by New Jersey WS include, protecting rare and threatened birds such as piping plovers, Least terns and black skimmers from predation; conducting sampling and monitoring for rabies; and managing damage caused by waterfowl, blackbirds, gulls, and other wildlife.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Agricultural Crops—WS NJ provides assistance to NJ agriculturalists regarding damage associated with birds. Canada goose damage to pasture, cranberries, blueberries, wheat, soybeans, corn, rye, oats, vegetables, sod, and barley; black vulture and turkey vulture damage to livestock; and starling/blackbird damage to dairies are important damage situations occurring in the Garden State. WS assists farmers in acquiring permits to control damage, and provides management recommendations to maximize use and effectiveness of harassment, modification of farming practices, and habitat modifications. WS plays an active role in the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Working Group and Animal Emergency Working Group.



Protecting Dairies and Feedlots—WS assists farmers and property managers to reduce blackbird and starling damage at dairies and feedlots. Programs consist of provision of technical assistance, recommendations for exclusion, modification of cultural practices, and WS implementation of harassment, trapping, shooting, and population management activities. WS coordinates these programs with local officials, farmers, the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, the NJ Pesticide Control Program, and Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

Protecting Health and Safety—The protection of human health and safety from wildlife damage and threats is the largest component of the WS program in New Jersey. Technical and operational assistance in this arena focus on management of wildlife hazards to aviation, Canada goose damage management, and wildlife disease monitoring activities.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—Wildlife strikes with aircraft have killed more than 157 people and destroyed over 140 aircraft worldwide since 1990; the aviation community recognizes that the threat to human safety from aircraft-wildlife collisions is increasing. In New Jersey and many other areas, populations of Canada geese, white-tailed deer, gulls, and other species are increasing in abundance and distribution, and posing unacceptable safety hazards at airports. Statewide, WS biologists assist New Jersey airports with wildlife hazard management training, conduct on-airport wildlife management consultations, develop FAA-required wildlife hazard assessments and management plans, and implement wildlife management programs to protect public and aviation safety.

WS has conducted an integrated wildlife hazard management program at ACY since 1989; the current program consists of partnerships between WS and South Jersey Transportation Authority (SJTA), the Federal Aviation Administration's W.J. Hughes Technical Center (FAATC), and the Atlantic County Utilities Authority (ACUA). With SJTA, WS staff stationed at ACY conduct training of airport personnel and wildlife hazard management patrols, develop and monitor the airport mowing plan, collect and manage bird strike information, conduct threatened and endangered species monitoring, and assist the airport in FAA compliance and acquisition of Federal and State permits. The partnership with SJTA supports WS biologists stationed at the Atlantic City Airport to lead the effort to reduce wildlife hazards and to ensure that program activities do not harm rare, threatened and endangered species. With ACUA, WS monitors and manages bird hazards associated with waste management activities.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting property and public health and safety from damage associated with Canada geese
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Managing agricultural damage caused by blackbirds, starlings, and pigeons
- Protecting rare, threatened and endangered birds from predation
- Partnering with other agencies to monitor wildlife diseases and evaluating management programs

Top 3 WS Research Projects of Interest to New Jersey:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, parasite, and noxious weed reservoirs
- Managing wildlife transmission of rabies

Protecting Human Health and Safety From Canada Geese—New Jersey supports the greatest density of resident Canada geese on the East Coast, with a total population estimated at 97,660 birds. Although most people enjoy seeing some geese around, problems often develop as goose feces accumulate, overgrazing damages landscaping, and aggressive geese attack children, senior citizens, and unwary customers, visitors, and clients. WS implementation of Canada goose damage management programs in NJ is based on agreements and support from the NJDFW, USFWS Law Enforcement, local officials, and property owners. Each year, WS assists more than 400 New Jersey residents with goose-related problems through provision of technical recommendations, removal of goose nests to curb aggression, implementation of goose harassment and behavior modification programs, and local goose population management to reduce health and safety threats. In some instances, biological sampling of Canada geese is conducted by WS through partnerships with state agencies and universities, to determine factors related to diseases such as avian influenza, and bacterial pathogens such as Salmonella, Shigella, and E. coli.

Partnering With Other Agencies To Evaluate Rabies Management Programs—An Oral Rabies Vaccination (ORV) program has been conducted in Cape May County, NJ since 1991, the longest continually running ORV program in the Nation. During 1991-2004, a total of approximately 257,000 baits containing vaccine have been distributed from the air or by hand during the early autumn. Baits are consumed by raccoons, which become vaccinated against the disease. Since 2002, WS has worked in partnership with the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Cape May County Department of Health to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. WS has conducted rabies surveillance work in Cape May, Atlantic and Cumberland counties, and recently (Autumn 2004) conducted a raccoon trapping project in Cape May County to obtain biological sample from the raccoon population. These activities contribute to the understanding and implementation of rabies management programs in New Jersey.

Conserving Rare, Threatened and Endangered Birds—New Jersey's 150-mile-long coastline has the potential to provide valuable habitat for threatened and endangered shorebirds. However, competition and predation from other wildlife species, as well as suburban development in shore communities, can be detrimental to some species. The WS New Jersey program protects rare shorebirds at Cape May National Wildlife Refuge, Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, and at the U.S. Coast Guard Training Center in Cape May to protect piping plover (Federally threatened, State endangered) and least tern (State endangered). These efforts contribute to the success of shorebird management programs to ensure the continued existence of these rare species in New Jersey's coastal ecosystems.

WS biologists stationed at the Atlantic City International Airport conduct threatened and endangered species monitoring surveys throughout the spring and summer. The number and location of nesting upland sandpipers (State endangered) and grasshopper sparrows (State threatened) is used by airport management and the FAA in airport operation decisions, and by WS to determine the placement of travel lanes used for bird hazard management activities. This work contributes to species conservation by reducing impacts of WS and airport activities on rare bird populations.

Protecting Rare Habitats From Wildlife Depredation—In New Jersey, WS conducts wildlife damage management projects to reduce negative impacts of Canada geese on restored wetlands in the New Jersey Meadowlands complex and on the rare native wild rice ecosystem on the Maurice River in southern New Jersey. At the Meadowlands and on the Maurice River,

Major Cooperators

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife
- Federal Aviation Administration
- U.S. Coast Guard
- New Jersey Department of Agriculture
- New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
- Rutgers University
- South Jersey Transportation Authority
- Municipal and County Health Departments

WS implements ongoing integrated goose damage management programs during spring-autumn, through partnerships with State Agencies, private organizations, and New Jersey citizens.

Protecting Property—WS New Jersey provides technical recommendations to citizens experiencing wildlife damage to property, and assists many of them in obtaining Federal permits to reduce property damage associated with migratory birds, especially Canada geese, vultures, and gulls. WS NJ biologists provide demonstrations of the use of specialized methods, including pyrotechnics, night vision equipment, and laser devices to detect and harass birds away from damage sites.

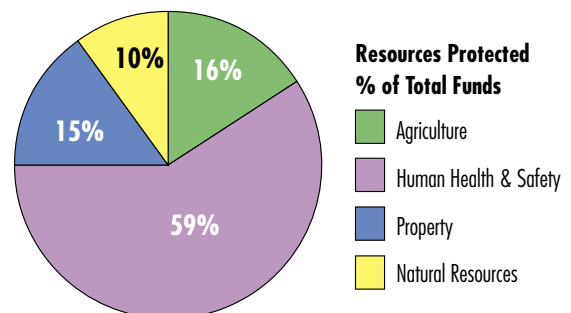
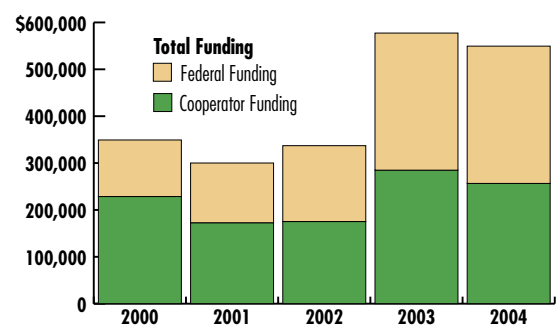
Protecting Property From Vulture Damage—Bird surveys conducted since the 1960's indicate increasing population trends for both turkey vultures and black vultures in the State. New Jersey citizens report vulture damage to decks, automobiles, other vehicles, and other property due to accumulations of feces and other vulture activities. WS provides technical recommendations, assists property owners in completing requirements of the Federal permit process, and implements vulture harassment projects to assist landowners in reducing damage.

Looking to the Future

While WS provides the people of New Jersey with safe, effective, and humane assistance for a diverse and growing range of wildlife conflicts, some people continue to experience wildlife damage problems. Assessing wildlife conflicts and implementing appropriate management measures requires expertise and resources that may be beyond the reach of some citizens. New Jersey's large population of resident Canada geese will pose increased challenges for the protection of public health and safety, property, agriculture and natural resources. Similarly, increasing populations of white-tailed deer, gulls, vultures and other species are posing growing threats at New Jersey's airports. Furthermore, public health situations, such as that posed by West Nile Virus several years ago, may emerge and challenge wildlife managers and public health officials in the future.

New Jersey Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; airports; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and Local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.



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